



U.S. Immigration  
and Customs  
Enforcement

# News Release

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**WOMAN AFFILIATED WITH EMBASSY OF GUINEA ARRESTED FOR OPERATING  
ILLEGAL FUNDS TRANSFER FIRM THAT MOVED MILLIONS OVERSEAS**  
*- Case is Latest in National Crackdown on Illegal Money Service Firms That Has Resulted in 120 Arrests -*

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Allan J. Doody, Special Agent-in-Charge of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) in Washington, D.C., today announced that ICE agents have arrested the owner of a D.C.-based illegal money transmittal business that wired millions of dollars around the globe in recent years. ICE agents have seized roughly \$100,000 from the company's bank accounts and \$19,700 in cash and other assets.

Late Monday, ICE agents arrested **Aissatou Pita Barry**, a native of the Republic of Guinea and resident of Silver Spring, Maryland, who is in the United States on an A2 Diplomatic Passport that authorizes her to work only at the Embassy of Guinea in Washington, D.C. There is no evidence Barry worked in any serious capacity at the Embassy of Guinea. Barry is charged in a criminal complaint with violating Title 18, USC Section 1960, operating an unlicensed money transmittal business.

Yesterday, Barry made an initial court appearance before U.S. Magistrate Judge Alan Kay in U.S. District Court in Washington, D.C. Barry remains detained on a \$75,000 cash bond and has been prohibited by the U.S. Magistrate from obtaining a new passport, visa, or other exit documents from the Embassy of Guinea. The arrest was the result of an investigation by ICE agents, in conjunction with the U.S. State Department's Diplomatic Security Service and the District of Columbia's Department of Insurance, Securities and Banking.

"This case clearly demonstrates the threat posed by unlicensed money transmittal businesses. Any criminal or terrorist can come to these underground businesses and have their millions wired anywhere in the world in a matter of seconds with no questions asked. In this case, the defendant even allowed individuals to make direct deposits to her business accounts for transfer overseas without ever knowing who these people were," said ICE Special Agent-in-Charge Allan Doody.

Barry was first encountered by federal agents in 1999 when they seized \$50,000 in undeclared U.S. currency that she was transporting abroad via Dulles International Airport. Barry subsequently incorporated a business called **Guinex International Inc.** in D.C. in August 1999. Although its stated purpose was "wholesale non-durable goods," the firm actually operated as a firm that received and transmitted funds throughout the U.S. and to foreign countries, according to the complaint. At no time was Guinex licensed to transmit funds abroad or domestically, although D.C. and federal law require such businesses to be licensed, the complaint alleges.

According to the complaint, Guinex transmitted at least \$5 million through its bank accounts in hundreds of transactions in recent years. Among other locations, funds were wired by Guinex to the United Arab Emirates, Turkey, India, Singapore and China, according to the complaint. Business cards provided by the firm also indicated that funds could be wired to affiliated offices in Senegal, France, the United Kingdom, and Guinea.

As part of the investigation, ICE agents learned that funds could be deposited directly into Guinex business accounts for transmittal overseas or that funds could be brought into the office for subsequent transfer. According to the complaint, Guinex typically charged a ten percent fee for its money transfer services, but would charge less if “big” money was deposited for transfer.

The arrest of Barry is the latest enforcement action in ICE’s nationwide crackdown on unlicensed money transmittal businesses. The USA Patriot Act, which was signed into law in October 2001, requires that money transmittal businesses be licensed by the federal government and/or applicable state governments. They are also required to file Suspicious Activity Reports. Since that time, thousands of money services businesses nationwide have registered. Nevertheless, many have failed to register and are operating outside the law.

Since the enactment of the USA Patriot Act, ICE has initiated more than 260 investigations into unlicensed money service businesses around the country and executed more than 100 search warrants in connection with these cases. During this time period, ICE investigations into unlicensed money service businesses have resulted in roughly 120 arrests, 130 indictments and the seizure of some \$23 million.

#ICE#

*U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement is the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security.*